## Knee arthroscopy (keyhole surgery) for patients with osteoarthritis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition or treatment</th>
<th>2019 NHSE Evidence Based Intervention for knee arthroscopy for patients with osteoarthritis</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Summary of intervention</strong></td>
<td>Arthroscopic washout of the knee is an operation where an arthroscope (camera) is inserted into the knee along with fluid. Occasionally loose debris drains out with the fluid, or debridement, (surgical removal of damaged cartilage) is performed, but the procedure does not improve symptoms or function of the knee joint.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Commissioning threshold</strong></td>
<td>Arthroscopic knee washout (lavage and debridement) should not be used as a treatment for osteoarthritis because it is clinically ineffective. Referral for arthroscopic lavage and debridement should not be offered as part of treatment for osteoarthritis, unless the person has knee osteoarthritis with a clear history of mechanical locking. More effective treatment includes exercise programmes (e.g. ESCAPE pain), losing weight (if necessary) and managing pain. Osteoarthritis is relatively common in older age groups. Where symptoms do not resolve after nonoperative treatment, referral for consideration of knee replacement, or joint preserving surgery such as osteotomy is appropriate. For further information, please see:</td>
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<td><img src="https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg230/evidence/overview-pdf492463117" alt="Image" /></td>
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<td><img src="http://www.escape-pain.org/" alt="Image" /></td>
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Referral guidance – exceptional circumstances

Referrals for exceptional circumstances are to be submitted by way of an Individual Funding Request (IFR) referral form for a decision by the IFR panel. The IFR referral form can be accessed from your clinical commissioning group’s website.

Effective from
April 2019

Summary of evidence / Rationale

NICE has reviewed the evidence for how well knee washout works for people with osteoarthritis. Seven clinical trials and three case studies have shown that knee washout for people with osteoarthritis did not reduce pain nor improve how well their knees worked. There was a small increased risk of bleeding inside the knee joint (haemarthrosis) (2%) or blood clot in the leg (deep vein thrombosis) (0.5%).

Review date
April 2022

Contact for this policy
wyhcpplannedcare@nhs.net

References:

1. NICE guidance: https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg230/evidence/overview-pdf492463117

2. NICE guidance: https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ipg230/chapter/1Guidance


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